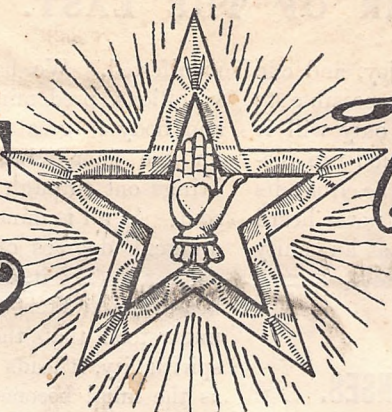


STAR OF THE EAST



A Monthly Journal, devoted to the propogation of the VEDANTA PHILOSOPHY,
the Universal Teaching of Souls' Unfoldment

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DEVOTION, ITS POWER AND BENEFIT.

In all religious systems devotion has been held out to man as being the only way to the realisation of our relation to God.

Devotion is not the long prayers and chants, but it is strictly the awakening of the soul, and the consciousness within of the need of coming closer in unity with the divine.

Jesus taught this, and all the divine incarnations before His time, and it will be taught as long as there is a soul to pave its way through material life. A man and woman who have discovered the blessed state into which humanity is brought in devotion, can never again find the pleasure he and she once had, nor can they become allured into the love for all worldly things which they had before their souls became awakened to the higher life. Devotion should not be confused with fanaticism; a devotee is not fanatical, but supremely calm; speaks only when it is really needed, but prefers to be silent and live within.

A person who has had the blessings of devotion revealed to him or her, need not the attention they first sought in the world, nor do they have the troubles for to-morrow which they once had to bear.

Devotion makes one feel satisfied with whatever comes, knowing that all things which happen are for a lesson which we can not see at the time it happens but will see later.

Devotion gives that supreme peace which can not be explained to any one who has not had the experience. A person who practices devotion has no pain or sickness, but is free from such things, and goes on and on to greater and greater usefulness. Devotion opens the inner

faculties in man and makes him see that all the divine potentialities are latent and will be manifested to the glory of the Lord.

Devotion is not to say "I am devotional," but to live it, and no one who has come into closer touch with the divine can help but show it in their lives. Devotion removes the limitation in which we have lived while we were in blindness, and we see God in everything, and we realise God in all mankind; and the more we learn of devotion the more we see that all this is but momentary and the spirit is the only reality.

There are conditions which we must observe in order to have the benefit and power devotion gives, and these conditions are:—

First, that we must never bear ill-feeling towards any one no matter what they do to us; we must always give what benefit we can to all our fellow men, and to forgive is a benefit we give, but it also comes back to us; if we hate we will have the vibrations of ill-feelings around us, and if we love we will have the vibrations of love.

Second, we must always try and help one the other, and to do so with a loving heart, and we shall always have the blessings which come with love, and devotion will bring us in touch with such divine love that we cannot but love the whole world.

Nothing is hidden for him who is a true devotee. He knows the present, and the past and the future is always the present to him, and he also knows that the same law of divine purpose has ruled all ages, and will do so for ever. Concentration of mind, suggestion, etc., will train the senses to realise that there is a higher state of understanding, but it can not bring man to that understanding, it takes devotion to do that.

Have you ever been in such close communion with God as to hear nature breathe? Have you ever listened while in communion with the within to the whispers of love's message in its variety? Ah, if you have, then you know how intimate God is with all things, and how everything responds to that soul who has become awakened to its beauty and the manifestation of it. One has everything in abundance when one has reached this wonderful state of divine communion. One sees nothing but beauty, one

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hears nothing but the benediction of divine joy, and one is fully free, fully individualised. It is impossible to describe it, it must be experienced and then only will it be known. In devotion one feels nothing which can disturb one's peace as everything speaks to one from its inner divine, one becomes as though one had never heard or seen anything wrong, as all things, as well as humanity smiles loves divine smile, and whispers "Peace, eternal peace be unto thee."

LESSON : TRAINING OF THE SENSES.

For the full understanding of this lesson we will refer our students to their notes (taken in the class) dealing with the vibrations of Tuesday, as there we will be reminded of the method by which we train the outer senses, such as reviving memory, calculation, and judgment in general affairs of life.

Some people labour under the impression that spirituality can be unfolded by dealing with the senses. Such can not be, as the senses, at the best, can only perceive that which appeals to them, for they are, and always will be, the tool only for the inner man.

Let no one think that one can be without this training, for it is through the senses that we realise that God is in things, as well as man, by seeing the changes in matter and thereby knowing of the energy within which causes the changes. The training of the senses takes place by study, concentration of mind, suggestion, and other methods by which our attention is drawn to the expressions of the law, and by which we come closer in contact with all, from an external point of view, because Vedanta advocates that man must learn devotion in order to realise by the inner self. It does not mean that we should not deal with the external and in that wise know all its power, but it teaches that all Yogis have trained their senses by various external means in order to bring the Lord within, expressed through them.

We see in the lesson for Tuesday that we deal with the external mind, and bring the will to bear so as to regulate our affairs to better termination, and we see further, we gain personality, strength, and poise to meet whatever comes in our way.

This is a great gain if it was only so far, but it does more. It purifies our thoughts and teaches us that we deal with more than the external alone. Please consult your notes upon this subject while reading this lesson in the "Star."

It will be seen by students of Yoga that not only the senses have to be trained, but the whole body, as all is taking part in the great evolution, and the goal for one is the goal for the other. We can not think clearly if our body is not in a good condition, which shows that the body supplies the mind with whatever power it needs to express through the senses externally. This is the reason why all Yoga study recommends breathing, because it sets the body into a more active condition which affects the mind. The senses being external are in reality only the "tools" which the inner man uses for expression, and this being so we can see that if the brain is not clear, and its matter supple, thought-power will be limitedly

manifested. We have not forgotten, I hope, that the vibrations predominating on Tuesday help both mind and body to greater activity, and this becomes a trainer for the finer mind (external), or in other words this brings out through the senses the finer qualities of the soul. As all is mind, though we call it "matter," it is in different degrees of expression, and matter, being the coarser part of it, needs training like a child until it has been fully awakened to its inner and finer self. Let it be understood that though this is not the expression of spirituality, it leads to spirituality, and the body as well as the mind becomes spiritualised until all the faculties which now are inactive in man shall act in their highest power and glory.

This is not the only benefit of mental training, but it gives health, youth, contentment as it can see more clearly the cause and effect of things and the law with them.

Mentality and intellectuality are the steps leading to the "upper story of realisation," but it is not realisation in itself, as that is only had when man can live outside of the senses with God, and become one with this he has seen in duality, and manifold before.

Let us go into quietude and hold our minds upon the inner life of things, and also understand that there is in all things that divine spark which in due time will become a flame of life and love which will give to the senses, as well as things beneath them, the proper stimulant by which to live the real and true life. We have now seen that the training of the senses is the first step to higher realisation. Please practice concentration upon higher subjects every day and you will know greater things from within.

FROM THE LIFE OF RAMAKRISHNA.

AS TOLD BY HIMSELF.

"I practised austerities for a long time. I cared very little for the body. My longing for the Divine Mother was so great that I would not eat or sleep. I would lay on the bare ground, placing my head upon a lump of earth, and cry loudly, O, Lord Mother, Mother, why dost Thou not come to me? I did not know how the days and nights passed away."

"I used to have ecstasy all the time."

"I saw my disciples as my own people, like children and relations, long before they came to me. I used to cry to the Lord, saying, O, Divine Mother, I am dying for my beloved ones (Bhaktas); do Thou bring them to me as quick as possible. At that time whatever I desired came to pass.

"Once I desired to build a small hut in the Panchavati (five sacred trees planted together for a grove to be used for contemplation and meditation) and to put a fence around it.

"Immediately after I saw a huge bundle of bamboo sticks, rope, strings, and even a knife, all brought by the tide in front of the Panchavati.

"A servant of the Temple, seeing these things, ran to me with delight and told me of them. There was the exact quantity of material necessary for the hut and the

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fence. When they were built nothing remained over. Everyone was amazed to see this wonderful sight.

"When I reached the continuous ecstasy I gave up all external forms of worship; I could no longer perform them. Then I prayed to the Lord, my Divine Mother: Mother, who will now take care of me? I have no power to take care of myself. I like to hear Thy name, and feed Thy bhaktas (beloved), and help the poor. Who will make it possible for me to do these things? Divine Mother, send me someone who will be able to do this for me. As the answer to this prayer there came to me a godly man by the name of Mathura Baby, who served me long, and with intense devotion and faith.

"Again at another time I said to the Lord, I shall have no child of my own, but I wish to have as my child a pure Bhakta who will stay with me all the time. O, Lord, Divine Mother, send me such. Then came Rakhal (Brahmananda, now head of the whole Ramakrishna movement, and particularly the Ramakrishna Mission in Calcutta, India).

"Those who are my own are part of my very self."

These are a few points out of the life of the blessed Bhagavan as told by Himself. He is considered the holiest man that India has produced in the nineteenth century. The lesson which we can learn from His experience and longing for the realisation of God within is the meekness and childlike nature, and His complete faith in the Lord. He was so childlike that He could only say "Mother" to the Lord, for He came to God in such an implicit surrender that there was no doubt in Him, and we see how, without seeming material help, all came to Him which He asked the Lord for. This is what Jesus taught when He said, "Unless ye become as little children ye cannot see the kingdom of heaven."

Neither Jesus, Ramakrishna, or any other Divine Incarnate, has prayed to God in the same sense as we ask our relative parents, or otherwise, for we see in them personally what we wish, and we do not give the credit of power to others. But Ramakrishna, He prayed to the creative and producing principle, and it was to the latter He held out his soul when He asked for what He wanted, and, as we all know, the principle of motherhood is the producing. Would that humanity understood the strength there is in the childish surrender to God; would that man would learn to go to the Lord for what he wants like a child in its innocence goes to its mother: we would never need to ask but once before our prayers would be heard and answered. One who truly understands to pray speaks to the inner life in man and things in the word "Lord," and there is a response at once. As we do not understand this we never look for the response but just keep on calling, and we are never still enough to let it make itself felt and experienced within us. When we love everything around us is love, when we hate everything around us is hate, and when we are happy everything around us is happy, because we send forth that life within us which is also latent in all things, and there being the oneness it can not be otherwise. This is the reason why we become such as we think, no matter what what we believe to the contrary; it is the law, and can not be otherwise.

Let us learn from the life of Blessed Ramakrishna that we pray not to a being only, but to all things, and the motherhood (the producer) brings to us that for which we pray.

WELLINGTON LETTER.

Beloved Readers of the STAR,

As above seen we are here in a city the most busy and active of all we have visited on the islands. Having had no time to view the city in its most beautiful places I cannot give a description of it in this letter, but I hope before I leave to be able to do so.

This place is more like the busy places in America than anyone we have seen since we left that part of the world, but we expect to see more of them before we leave Australia.

Our work is in full going now, and the people come out better than we expected before coming here, and genuine interest is shown in the teachings of Vedanta here as well as in other places where we have been.

Everything is very expensive here and we have to live in perfect faith of being provided for and "he who has faith shall not come to shame."

The harbour is not as grand here as in Sydney, or the inlet of Dunedin, the latter is a dream of beauty: when one leaves the wharf and glides along towards the ocean, the view is certainly the most elaborate one can wish for, as on both sides the hills, with their different shadings in green, are lovely white cottages, and beautifully laid out flowerbeds; the sight is wonderful, and one becomes charmed by its smiles. As we mentioned in our last letter, we have left a good club and many true friends in Dunedin, and we shall be most happy to make another visit when we are commanded to do so, and until then, peace and blessings be with its people. We stepped off at Christchurch to help our Club along there, and after we had introduced more and higher work to our Club there and helped them into the working in their new positions we left with much joy over the good work they are doing in that place, and the way in which the meetings are now conducted. Our visit was indeed a stimulant to all the members and they have taken a new hold of the work there that cannot help bearing good fruit in its right time.

We expect to do great work here, form a Club as well, and after it is done we shall return to our many friends in Sydney and do for them what we can.

As soon as we can convince the people that it is not the number, or how *much* they read, or *what* they read, but it is what longing they have in their souls to know God, and until that longing is instilled in their hearts, Vedanta will remain a letter only. There has got to be life, there has got to be interpretation from within, and until that comes to us we can never have the happiness we are seeking.

I have been delighted to receive such good reports of the work in the Vedanta Club in Sydney the last three months. From the Minutes we find that they have not been very many, but those who have come out have had the most

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peaceful and divine experiences in those meetings. This is better than if there should be a great crowd, and there not be harmony. Without harmony there can be no fruit, and all who wish to bring out their higher selves, must have harmony round them, otherwise God cannot manifest Himself from within.

We shall go back to Sydney filled with energy, more than before (if such can be), filled with divine longing for the happiness of all those who wish to go higher. We shall give a special course of lectures, subjects of which we have received programme from our Master, Swami Abhedananda, and if there is such a thing as to instil more activity in the Sydney people spiritually, we are going to work towards that end, and all who long to hear what we have to give are, and shall be, heartily welcome. We live on the hills here, and we have the view all over the harbour, and the beautiful Mount Victoria right in front of us, and the beauty in the evenings is great, when all the lights are lit and reflect in the water, when I have time to sit down and look at it it is to me as though there were lamps from our sisters and brothers in lower degrees of activity not known to us, but it is really the light of God meeting its own. "Stormy Wellington" has been very quiet since we came here, there has not been a stormy day; that means, such storms as this place is noted for. There has been moderately windy weather a couple of times, but not to inconvenience. It has been rainy, but not very much at meeting times, for about 8 o'clock it has stopped, or lightened in falling, so that it has not hurt our meetings as far as the attendance is concerned, as we have had large attendances since our meetings begun.

Beloved, I am busy night and day with my work, but I find that the more work the more strength, happiness and joy, for life becomes more lovely the more of activity we are in; it becomes easy, interesting and charming to live when one can do some good for others, and one becomes so content to live that one becomes younger and younger, and all things smile at those who smile on life. It is only the "grunters" who are unhappy, but those who learn the blessings and love of God in their souls do not find fault with it. I am happy, gloriously happy, as I know that this degree of physical expression is but a "pass by" towards higher understanding and peace. All those of you who are sick begin to recognise the God within you, rise and hold in your mind that there is power within now to cure and place the body and soul on the pinnacle of youth and strength. I must close this time and come again in next issue.

I am lovingly yours for the freedom of the race,
SISTER AVABAMIA.

THE GOLD OF SPEECH.

"Guard well thy words—
How else can thou be master of thyself?
Well-poised and courteous speech can make thee king
Among thy fellowmen.
Keep watch upon thyself,
And govern well thy lips as a door into the treasure-house,
That nothing may be stolen from thee unawares,
By sudden moods."

MABEL PERCY HASKELL.

"The world exists for the education of each man."

—Emerson.

"He who seeth Me in all, and all in Me, loseth Me not, nor do I lose him."
—"Gita."

"When we indulge impatience we produce disturbed conditions of the soul. Our higher self knows the repose of infinite peace, while the mortal feels only the difficulty of its attainment."
—Charles B. Newman.

"The vast voice of endless ecstasy is silence."—Siddhartha.

"The beams of divine light are now being shed upon the world as in the fifth century, before Christ."—M.R.C.

ATTAINMENTS IN SILENT COMMUNION.

"The soul that worships in silence becomes always as a little child, and the soul that becomes as a child finds God oftenest as Mother."

"In meditation before the blessed sacrament (the symbol of the devotion of the heart to God) some exquisite pen has written the assurance, My child, you need not know much in order to please Me, love Me dearly and speak to Me as you would speak to your mother if she had taken you in her arms."—From "Kali the Mother," by Sister Nevidita.

"Oh, beloved, be in silence often and we shall become glorified by wisdom."

QUESTION BOX.

Q.—"How can we free ourselves from bad influences?"

A.—Kind brother, this question is dealt with so often that it should be clear to us that when our minds are in the things which only concern the body we attract such influence to us, but when we deal with the God within us and hold our minds there we are not afflicted with the lower but we rise above it. Where the thoughts of man are such will be the surrounding attracted from it, and this holds well in all cases. The aim of Vedanta is to teach mankind how to free itself from the bondage in which it is in this respect, but it can not be done unless we lift our desires away from the material plane and its ignorance, as nothing with which we deal upon it can spiritualise us, but for the spiritualisation we must go beyond earthly things and seek in meekness in the inner self by devotion.

Q.—Who was Swami Vivekananda?—L.

A.—He was one of the chief disciples of Ramakrishna, who took the vow and became a monk of the Ramakrishna Order, and worked for the enlightenment and freedom of the race until He passed from His body.

Q.—How can one become free from worldliness?—P.

A.—By coming closer to God in meditation.

ANNOUNCEMENT.

We earnestly request all whose subscription has, or is about to terminate, to re-subscribe at once in order not to miss the many good things which the "Star" brings each month. All money orders must be sent to J. S. Warner, Manager. Address P.O. Box 1064, Sydney, Australia.